

Sunday, May 10, 2020 am – ONLINE lesson.

WHEN We Set Your Mind On Things Above Colossians 3:1-17

Last week we addressed Colossians 3:1-2 where Paul encouraged these brethren to set their mind on things above. This is a fundamental text that will help us be Christians as God desires. In that lesson we noted: 1) We are to seek those things that are above – we should be looking at things that originate with God and heaven. We even listed a handful of things that fit within that description – The Godhead is there obviously (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), but then there is our understanding of heaven itself – the place we ought to desire to go, there is the word of God, the church which was part of His eternal plan, Wisdom from above, our heavenly calling – the invitation to follow Him which came from Him, and finally instructions on how we live our lives (more on this one in a moment). 2) We are to set our mind on things above – the first verse involves earnestly looking for something, but what happens when you find it? You “set your mind” or make up your mind to obtain it, much like the merchant seeking the pearl of great price which when he finds it, he sells all that he has to obtain it. Finding something is meaningless if we don’t reach out and take it. That is why we set our goal to achieve heaven.

Following this, Paul lists a number of practical things that describe the life of one who has set his mind on things above. Today, I want to mention these things. It is a moderately long passage with a number of things. I could spend lessons on each of these areas, but here my goal is to simply mention them and make a few brief observations about each of them as they related to setting our mind on things above. So let’s get started with this.

I. What does this mean? (3:3-17ff)

a. You died and your life is hidden with Christ in God (vs. 3) –

We began our lesson last week by noting that we are to be different. Everything about us needs to be different – we act, think, speak and make our decisions differently.

We are different because we have put to death the old man of sin. That is why repentance must be emphasized and understood as one obeys the gospel (Acts 2:38, Romans 6:2-6, This was also mentioned in Colossians 2:11-12 – buried with Him in baptism, and raised through faith...)

So, rather than letting the world and its ways rule us, Christ is to rule in our hearts. He is our LORD – as in the ruler of our lives.

Galatians 2:20, I am crucified with Christ...

Romans 12:1-2 describes us as a living sacrifice – we now belong to Him.

b. You live with hope (vs. 4) – In vs. 4, Paul notes that when Christ appears, we will appear with Him in glory. We have recently addressed the importance of hope. Hope keeps us going and enduring whatever comes our way. Paul began this letter speaking of “the hope which is laid up for you in heaven...”

Just know, that living a life that is different, filled with sacrifices and even enduring trials and hardships for His cause, will not go unnoticed by God. IN the end, there is a reward awaiting that will make all things worthwhile.

c. You put to death the earthly members (5-7) –

throughout the New Testament, there are a number of “lists”, some describing good behaviors and others bad behaviors. The text is always clear which is which. And in our context we have several short lists.

Here we find the types of behaviors we are to destroy from our lives.

This particular list describes fornication (which is unlawful sexual relations – meaning anything outside of a God sanctioned marriage) and the various and the various qualities that lead to such.

Every sin mentioned here – could fall under the category of lusts – uncleanness (filthiness whether language, immodest dress, what you watch at home and when you are out, places and things that bring out our sensual lusts).

Worthy of mention is covetousness which is described as idolatry. Covetousness is the lust for things, especially more than what is allotted you. We LIVE IN a very immoral world that is filled with appeals to our lustful desires – both sensual and material.

CONSIDER what vs. 6 says about these – because of such the wrath of God is coming. Friends sensual pleasures may feel good as they are being enjoyed, but they NEVER give you lasting and meaningful purpose. They DON'T make society better! And they will NEVER strengthen you spiritually. NOTE 1 John 2:15-17.

Vs. 7 – in which you once walked. Paul told the Corinthians in a similar and more developed list, “and such were some of you...” 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

Note 1 Peter 4:1-3 – we been there long enough. IF you find that you are driven by lustful behaviors, it is time to change! That is what setting your mind on things above is about.

- d. You control your attitude and tongue (8-9) – Again we find another list of “don’ts”. In this case Paul deal with attitudes, and especially those involving hateful reactions and the tongue. How many problems are caused by the abuse of the tongue. That is what James 3 warns about. Consider James 3:2, 5-6. Proverbs 10:19, *“In the multitude of words, sin is not lacking. But he who restrains his lips is wise.”*

ALSO, worthy of mention is lying – we need to be truthful!

If you are going to set your mind on things above it HAS TO BEGIN with your attitude and keeping your mouth shut in ungodly circumstances.

- e. You put on the new man (10-11) – remember that in becoming a Christian, you put to death that man of sin. BUT, it cannot end there. What you put off HAS TO be replaced with good things. If you leave “the house” empty and swept, there is always the temptation to let your old ways back in, and when they return it is usually with a vengeance.

Jesus told a parable about this in Luke 11:24-26.

Even our ungodly society realizes this. IN every 12 step program, you don’t just quit the bad and addictive behavior, you have to replace it with good behaviors and things that will keep you on track. That is why so much of the New Testament instructions to Christians is about what are to be doing. I suspect what we are to do outweighs what we cannot do.

It is the NEW MAN that has hope of seeing the things above.

NOTE: Vs. 11 tells us it is available to all!

- f. You put on godly attitudes (12-13) – again, we emphasize the importance of attitude. But this time, it is the types of attitudes we are to put on – tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with one another and forgiving one another.

IT goes without saying that these are the qualities that make the world a better place. The atheist and agnostic, if honest, will readily admit and advocate for these types of behaviors. The only problem is they have no real basis for asking other than, “just because you should do it.”

Christians act this way because it helps us to set our mind on things above. Paul called such things “the fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23) Note, “Against such things there is no law.”

- g. Put on love (14) – while also an attitude, Christian love deserves its own category because of its impact.

This love is our motivation for our attitudes and actions. It is described in 1 Corinthians 13:1-8a. It is the basis of all the commands of God, both toward Him and others, according to our Lord (Matthew 22:37-40).

In our text, Paul described it as the bond of perfection – meaning that it perfectly ties us together.

This Christian love is at the foundation of every relationship we find ourselves in including: Love for God and Jesus (and their love for us), our neighbors, our family, our brethren and even our enemies.

When all have love, we can work through whatever we face.

If you want to set your mind on things above, learn to love God and all His ways as your ought to.

- h. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts (15) – like our hope, we have been discussing this peace throughout our online studies.
We crave and need true and inner peace. Typically, when peace is lacking something is wrong. And if it is internal, we likely need to make some changes in our lives.
It will give us a calm that is so needed around us (Philippians 4:6-7).
- i. Let the word of Christ dwell in your richly (16a) – Is God’s word influencing you?
His word is where we will find out about those things that are above. His word will provide for us “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3).
His word, the gospel, is the power of God unto salvation and reveals the righteousness of God (Romans 1:16-17). It is living and powerful and sharper than a two-edged sword because it can pierce the soul and spirit, and discern the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). There are so many things to be said about God’ word.
Paul challenges us in this text to not just know the word, but to let it DWELL within you richly in all wisdom. Let it be that which makes you sound (healthy) – (cf. 2 Timothy 1:13)
Is His word continually on your mind? If you are setting your mind on things above, it most certainly will be.
- j. Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (16b) – this is an interesting description in the midst of all these personal admonitions.
We often use this verse (and others) to teach why we only sing acapella (without instruments). And that IS the pattern we find consistently throughout the New Testament. BUT I once read somewhere that since this verse is in the midst of personal admonitions, it doesn’t even apply to the assembly. **! DISAGREE!** In fact, a point we can take from this text is that a part of setting your mind on things above **IS TO ASSEMBLE!**
One seeking heaven sees the importance of his brethren and cherishes time together with them in worship. Isn’t that the point of Hebrews 10:24-25 – don’t forsake the assembling of yourselves together? Some many things were and are accomplished when we come together following God’s pattern. It’s a crucial part of being a Christian, yet flippantly dismissed as an option by so many.
And it is my prayer that in this present circumstance we will more greatly appreciate our freedom to assemble when we can.
- k. Seek His authority in all that you do (17) – another verse that is frequently quoted, and should be. It is simply saying, we need authority for all that we do. Whatever we are doing in this life, IF we have set our mind on things above, we are going to ask if our Lord is pleased with what we do and how we do it.
Is He pleased where we go, how we talk, what our attitude is, what is our priority, how important our brethren are to us as well as His word?
We really do need to ask, WWJD? Just make sure you accept what He says through His word as you ask that.
- l. Be grateful (17b) – finally, we find gratitude needs to always accompany our lives. Gratitude is an attitude that will move us to do the right things and avoid the wrong things. When we appreciate God and all He has done, it gives us cause to serve Him. As we read in 1 John 4:19, “We love Him because He first loved us.” That is a grateful love.
Colossians is only 4 chapters and each chapter mentions this thankfulness – Colossians 1:12 – giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance; Colossians 2:7 – established in the faith,... abounding in it with thanksgiving; 4:2, *Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving.*

Conclusion: As I noted at the beginning, we could devote extensive time to each of these topics, but that was not my intent with this lesson. I wanted to give an overview of HOW we can set our minds on things above. I want to encourage you to think about each of these on your own and make appropriate application. AND we could keep going. Paul next mentions relationships in the home and with servants and masters, and how we each have our part in these matters.

The point is that the mind that is set above will have this type of character in it. So as you look at your life, is your mind set on things above? And remember, your actions speak louder than your words. Think about it!